

Swedish American Genealogist

Volume 26 | Number 1

Article 12

3-1-2006

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Recommended Citation

Asp, Jan Sokody (2006) "I Found the Needle! Part 2," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 26 : No. 1 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol26/iss1/12>

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I Found the Needle!

My search for the immigrant Asp Family in America and Sweden. Part II

BY JAN SOKODY ASP



In order to begin my research in Sweden, I studied about the resources available by reading "Tracing Your Swedish Ancestry" by Nils William Olsson and purchasing "Cradled in Sweden", by Carl-Erik Johansson. I learned about vital records, clerical surveys (household examination rolls), moving records, probate records, county and province differences, and emigration films.

My mother-in-law, Eleanor Carlson Asp, is entirely Swedish so my first Swedish genealogy experience was tracing and documenting her parents' lines. Her father was Charles August Carlson (Karl August Karlsson) b. 1874 in Grimshult, Ödeshög (Östg). Her mother's parents were the immigrants. Lila Swanson Carlson's father was George Swanson (Göran Peter Svensson) b. 1848, Södra Ralingsås Norrgård, Lommaryd, Jön. Her mother was Maria Charlotta Johansdotter, b. 1845 in Spånshult, Bredestad, (Smål.). They all had lived in Moline, Illinois. I did not have the name of the last parish but an obituary gave the name as "Bresto." I showed it to an experienced Swedish genealogist at the Wilmette FHC along with a list of all parishes beginning with "B" and she chose "Bredestad." If you have a problem locating a place in Sweden, ask a person who can read Swedish to look at the English spelling.

In my possession, I have topographical maps. They are wonderful for locating the outlying places

within the parish boundaries. All the ancestors I have traced have not come from the town with the parish name. I find it very satisfying to be able to pinpoint the exact location of the birthplace, as an example, Grimshult in the parish of Ödeshög, on a map and to follow a family as they move from one farm to another.

My estimated time for immigration was 1851 to 1854. On 10 March 1979, I ordered a Stockholm passenger list film at a LDS branch library, next, six passenger journal films from four Swedish counties. I ordered fifteen Stockholm City parish films covering births for the years 1844-1850 and four films covering other county parishes. The Asp name was not found in any of these films.

In the summer of 1982, Ingrid Klering of Stockholm, the daughter of Eleanor's cousin, Agne, visited in Elgin for six weeks. When she returned to Sweden, she took the Asp family data. Her mother sent it to the Emigrant Institute in Växjö. A letter arrived from Växjö with information from the SCB (Swedish Central Bureau of Statistics) archive about an ASP family emigrating from Sweden in 1851, stating that they came from Luleå in the northern part of Sweden. The names were not 100% correct. They were:

Anne C. 7, Caroline 30, Christine M. 10, I Fred 35, John A. 4

Only the first and last seemed to be a possibility with three years difference in age and correct names. Thirty-five from fifty-one would be

year 1816 so that could be the father but not the name. I had been looking for four family members, not five. I had been looking for Christine, not Caroline.

I was doubtful about this list but I was grasping at straws. After locating Luleå on a map in Norrbotten County, I decided to search northern Sweden. From October of 1982 to May of 1984 I ordered clerical surveys covering seventeen parishes in Norrbotten, three in Västerbotten, and four in Västernorrland. A letter written October 10, 1983, arrived from the Landsarkivet in Härnösand. They were unable to find the Asp family in their Norrbotten records. On page 73 in "Cradled in Sweden" a chart shows the number of emigrants from each county for ten-year periods between 1851 and 1925. Only two left from Norrbotten and none from Vasterbotten between 1851-1860. That was a wild goose chase and I was back to square one! I only had Sweden: no parish, no county, and no province. Should I give up the search?

New information

In the fall of 1983, a positive change began to take place when I reread a typed note from Aunt Katy. Information she had found at the Louisa County Courthouse stated that John Henry Asp had two boys and TWO girls: Charlotte Ann and Christine. Maybe that list from Växjö was the Asp family?

Next, my in-laws moved from Elgin, Illinois, to Geneseo, east of Moline, Illinois. The day after Thanksgiving, I drove to the Mercer County Courthouse in Aledo to look at land records for the purchase of the blacksmith shop in New Boston. The indenture made on August 15, 1854, shows that John Asp and Caroline Asp purchased a lot in New Boston. Both names are on the record when the lot was sold on April 24, 1856. Across the hall was the Registrar's Office. Even though I have the original marriage certificate for John August and was in a hurry to leave to drive to New Boston and Toolesboro, I spontaneously decided to check the marriage application, as well as a marriage index, looking for the daughter, Christine. I did not find Christine (she is still a mystery), but I found that the parents of John August were John Asp and Caroline. The 1851 ship list now seemed more an actuality.

A trip to the Federal Archive Branch in Chicago enabled me to see the passenger manifest for the ship arriving at the port of New York on September 17, 1851. The Swedish Brig was named *Luleå*. The family was at the top of the list and the father's name looked like it began with a "J" not an "I". I thought, yes indeed, this is the family I have been seeking. I copied all 86 names on the passenger list. It turned out to be very important in my later research.

Plans were being made to open a LDS branch library in Schaumburg, Illinois, which meant a drive of twenty minutes instead of an hour. I was asked to consider being a volunteer, if they were able to get permission for a non-member to serve. My in-laws were also talking about a second trip to Sweden and I desperately wanted to find the place of origin of my father-in-law's family.

Intensifying my research

I made lists:

1. Film numbers for 1851 Clerical Surveys for each parish in each county.

2. Extraction of Nils Wm. Olsson's books regarding passenger arrivals: where they came from and where they went
3. References to the name Asp on the International Genealogical Index
4. Swedish places beginning with ASP: extracted from "Svensk Ort-forteckning" (Agne had given me the book)
5. Swedish places similar to "Nevada"
6. Extraction of County Histories for Mercer, Knox, Henry, and Rock Island recording places of origin of Swedes
7. References for the name given to me by genealogy contacts

Next, I made a copy of each county map and marked the above references by parish. Three areas of concentrated marks were obvious: Kalmar, Östergötland, and Jönköping; Uppsala and Gävleborg; and Södermanland. After analysis of all the above data, I was ready to begin ordering clerical surveys films for 1851 when the Schaumburg FHC opened October, 1984.

Choosing more straws

I volunteered at the branch library on Wednesdays from 9:00 to 4:00 and ordered four films each week.

A clerical survey also called a household examination roll, known in Sweden as the *husförhörlängd*, is a fantastic and unique record. It should be used by the researcher along with the birth, marriage, and death records. Each year a member of the state church would question all members of the household in order to record what they knew about the catechism. One record might cover five or ten years. The survey lists the place within the parish boundaries where the family lives, the names of the family members, their relationship, occupation, birth dates, birth parish, marriage year, death dates, moving in year and place where they came from and the column I was most interested in, moving out, showing where they moved and the year.

The first clerical survey film I chose to order on October 24, 1984, was *Locknevi*, Kalmar County. My reference came from Olsson's work SPAUS. There was no Asp in his index. However, a word-by-word search of his book revealed on page 355: "Anna Marie Asp Bäckstrom was still listed as a member of the St. Ans-garius Church in Chicago in 1853 together with her s. Anders Peter and dau. Christina Maria." Further information in the same note, #3139, shows Peter Larsson m. to Anna Maria Bäckström b. in Åninge, Locknevi Parish May 27, 1806, dau. Peter Bäckström and Stina Jons-dotter. They had children and the entire family emigrated from Locknevi in 1849.

When I looked at the clerical survey, I found a family leaving for "Norra Amerika 1851", and the names were Petter Beckstrom b. 1815, wife Anna Marie Asp b. 1821, son Johan August b. 1848, and daughter Christina Maria b. 1850 living in Fogelåsa. Three lines below: "Enk. Smed. Peter Asp b. 1785, Feb. 26, Hjorted." Was he the father of Anna Maria?

I next looked at the *Luleå* passenger list and found written on lines 66-69: P. Beckstrom 36, Anna 30, Joh. 3, Christine 9 mos. The ages and birth dates matched. Why is this family on same boat with the Asp family? Is Anna related to John Henry? Should I concentrate my search in the Kalmar area?

Then I ordered the clerical survey for Södra Vi, (Smål.). A couple leaving for America in 1853 caught my eye because the wife's father's name was *Achilles*. I recognized that name. It was on the boat list. (I had looked at the couple because I was extracting all names of people leaving in the years 1851 to 1859). Ulrica Charlotta Jacobsdotter was born 7 August 1830 in Nykil, (Östg.). Her parents were Jacob Achilles and Anna Greta Andersdotter Gottsell. On the passenger list, following the Asp family was: J. Achilles, 59; Anna, 60; Maria, 24; and Caroline, 11. Next I ordered the Nykil film and eventually

found Jacob Achilles and his family leaving in September of 1851.

The needle at last!

On May 1, I arrived at the Family History Center wondering which films had come in and how many patrons would arrive. The only patron was Margaret Nelson, a retired school librarian and bridge player friend. For six years, we had been traveling together to and from the Wilmette FHC. I had convinced Margaret to research her Swedish genealogy. She could read and speak the language. When the Schaumburg FHC opened, our indefinite loan films were transferred from Wilmette so Margaret's Swedish films were in the cabinet.

Two films, ordered on March 3, had arrived. Both were from Vimmerby, (Smål.). I decided to look at the *Stadsförsamlingen* (city) first. I looked at the far right *Bortflyttat* (moving out) column on p. 205 and read: *till* (to) **Amerika**, *år* (year) **51**. I quickly looked to the right side and read:

Grönlid:

Smeden *Johan Henrik Asp*, Locknevi 8 Jan. 1816.

H [=hustru] *Carolina Göransdotter*, Hjorted 3 Aug. 1819.

D [=daughter] *Christina Maria Törnsfalla* 22 Oct. 1841 Oct.

D *Anna Charlotta Vimmerby* 20 Nov. 1844.

S *Johan August Vimmerby* 1 Dec. 1847.

I kept looking at the familiar names, the birth years: 1816, 1844, and 1847, the three-year birth difference for Anna and Johan and finally said, "Margaret, Margaret, I think I found them! What does Smeden mean?" Her reply was "blacksmith". She studied the screen and said, "I have the 1816 Locknevi clerical survey film here." I quickly pulled that film out of the cabinet and placed it on the reader. I rolled the film to page 151 and read:

Namn	Född		Hjortad
	uti	år	
Peter Henriksson Asp		Feb 26,	1785
H Stina Bengtsdotter		Apr 29,	1778
Son Johan Henric		Jan 8,	1816
Johan Henrik Asp		b. 1749	Risinge, (Östg.)
Christina Maria Törnsfalla		b. 1841	Oct.
Anna Charlotta Vimmerby		b. 1844	Nov.

Vimmerby Stadsförsamling AI:10, p. 205

Fogelså:

Peter Henriksson Asp Hjorted Feb 26, 1785.

H *Stina Bengtsdotter* Frödinge Apr 29, 1778.

Son *Johan Henric* Locknevi Jan 8, 1816.

I ordered the next Locknevi clerical survey and verified that Johan Henric and Anna Marie were indeed siblings.

Hjorted, (Smål.), was also Margaret's parish. All the films were in the cabinet. I was able to add two more generations that very day and also found the marriage record, December 18, 1840, for Johan and Carolina. Margaret's reply was, "I came across the name *Asp* but I never thought anything about it!" I had been that close to the films for six years.

Later that evening, I wondered if there could be another family with the same names? Did they come from a parish where the records had burned? No! I am claiming the *Asp* family I found today. It was time to celebrate. I could not tell my in-laws for they were on a bus returning home from Indiana.

From October 24, 1984, to April 24, 1985, I had ordered fifty-one films. I found the family on the thirty-second. It was difficult to believe that I had found them in six months and one week. I had been hoping it would only take one year and not more than

ten. Success in genealogy requires determination, perseverance, creative thinking, spontaneous genealogical activity resulting in unexpected finds or serendipity moments, and an extensive amount of just plain **luck**. I had them all!

My in-laws did return to Sweden. Agne drove them to Vimmerby, Hjorted, and the house in Simmerum where Carolina Göransdotter was born and lived until she married. Her father was Göran Hansson Hall Wipa,

a *kronobåtsman* (naval soldier/ailor). The last name was given to the man that lived in the Simmerum house provided for the *båtsman*. (Margaret Nelson had a collateral relative who lived there in the later 1800's and had the name of Wipa.) They did not go to Falsterbo In Hjorted, where Peter Asp was born. His father, Henric Nilsson Asp, b. 1749 Risinge, (Östg.), was a master blacksmith and the first ancestor I have found to have the *Asp* name.

Later in my research, I ordered the probate records for Peter Asp and Göran Wipa. The translation of their household belongings was interesting and a challenge. How difficult and sad it must have been for these two fathers to have their only children leave Sweden, never to see them again. Both records named their children living in "Amerika."

Thank you to:

Nils William Olsson for writing his book, providing the most important straw, Locknevi.

Al Mink, a member of Elgin Genealogy Society, for giving me the book.

Agne Klering for bringing me maps and the place book.

The blond-haired, blue-eyed fellow for providing money to order the films.

My children who did not verbally protest my time spent on this wonderful hobby called *Genealogy*.